WR-C

WXPost

Priscilla Johnson McMillan

MAY 4 1975

The Oswald Evidence

Why, after more than a decade, do so many Americans still have doubts about the assassination of President Kennedy? Why is it hard for so many of us to lay this event to rest?

For the doubts, and the doubters, are there. They are vocal—and they are listened to. In the first days of April alone, three major national publications carried articles featuring doubts about the Kennedy assassination. A conference about these questions was held recently at Boston University and six members of the House of Representatives, led by Rep. Henry Gonzales (D-Texas), are pressing for a new investigation.

I have been researching the assassination for several years and I believe that the Warren Commission, which was set up by President Johnson immediately after the assassination to try to ascertain the truth, not only was well motivated but it also reached the right conclusions. The commission found that Lee Harvey Oswald had killed the President, had done so alone and that there had been no conspiracy. Going on the "hard" evidence alone, it was probably the strongest case ever assembled against a single individual.

But the commission's report has shortcomings. I find them mostly in the area of Oswald's motivation. Because of the shortage of time (the commission finished in 10 months), the profusion of false leads that it wasted precious weeks tracking down, and a predilection on the part of the commissioners for "hard" facts over evidence that might have shed light on Oswald's complex personality, the report failed to flesh out a convincing portrait of Lee Harvey Oswald as a living, breathing human being who, in his eyes anyhow, might have had cause to kill the President.

Thus a few witnesses were not questioned who ought to have been. Crucial witnesses who knew Oswald well were wasted—because they were questioned ineptly. The final 11 volumes of the commission's 26 volumes of supporting evidence are so atrociously organized that they are hard for anyone to use and easy for some to distort.

Because of my interest in motive, I am eager to track down as many as I can of Oswald's movements, even his thoughts, during the year and a half before the assassination. Sometimes I need to know what time of day a certain photograph was taken or how long a particular bus ride might take at a given hour of day or night. With difficulty, I have managed to extract guesses at least from the very back volumes of the report, but nowhere have I found critical newspaper clippings of April 1963 announcing the return to Dallas of Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker, whom Oswald attempted to shoot on April 10. Yet evidence of this kind can shed light, not on the Walker attempt alone, but on Kennedy's assassination.

The commission's decision to sequester even the smallest bit of autopsy evidence was a catastrophic mistake. Publication of all the material, especially photographs of the head wounds, would have hurt everyone's sensibilities, but it would have prevented, for all time, the now obsessive questions as to the direction of the final shot.

Now that doubts have been sown and questions are alive on every side, what can be done to set the doubts to rest?

I favor any honest investigation that stands a chance of bringing new facts to light or even ventilating old ones, since we have today a new generation, of college age and younger, that has never been exposed to the hard facts that at first made the Warren report so persuasive.

But I believe doubts whether Oswald was a secret agent will never be set to rest. No intelligence agency is going to step forward and say it hired him. It would be a miracle if evidence of this nature should be unearthed. I feel certain that Oswald was not and could not have been anybody's agent. But most of my evidence is negative. It lies in understanding his personality.

Lastly, I believe that the killing of a President, or a king or father, is the hardest of all crimes for men to deal with. As Freud pointed out, it is this crime that stirs the deepest guilt and anxiety. A hundred years after the fact, questions still stir about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. For the doubts about this one crime, the crime of parricide, lie deep as human nature itself. No matter what steps are taken, what investigation may be authorized or what autopsy material made public, I suspect that the doubts about President Kennedy's murder are going to be with us forever.

Mrs. McMillan is completing a biography of Marina and Lee Harvey Oswald. This article first appeared in the Christian Science Monitor.